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NEWS

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STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE HERBERT H. BATEMAN

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY READINESS

MARK-UP FY 1998 DoD AUTHORIZATION ACT

June 5, 1997

The subcommittee meets today to mark up the Military Readiness portion of the Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1998. Through a series of in-depth hearings on a wide range of readiness issues, and having a little more time this year to review the budget request, I believe that the mark before us achieves the goals that we all share: providing the necessary resources to ensure force readiness and improving the quality of life for the men and women of our armed forces.

Over the past two years, this committee identified several areas for priority attention and provided additional funding. These areas included real property maintenance, depot maintenance, base operations support and reserve readiness. For the second year in a row, the fiscal year 1998 budget request cuts funding in all these areas to a level below what was provided last year. The package before you provides additional resources in these and other areas where the Department of Defense has failed to sufficiently provide adequate funding.

The mark also contains several provisions that I believe will help the Department of Defense to revise the ways that it characterizes the actual readiness of our military forces. In addition, there are provisions that will require the DOD to report to Congress on the movement of readiness funding within the various spending accounts. I believe it is important that we fully understand what the department is doing with readiness funding.

Unlike the previous two years, the subcommittee has not received any additional funding. Therefore, to accomplish the increases in the readiness sensitive areas, we have had to make some reductions in the budget request, particularly the accounts that reflect program growth this year. I am recommending reductions in the amount of funds authorized for consultants, civilian personnel and bulk fuel over budgeting, and in the administrative and support areas. I am convinced these reductions will not directly affect the readiness capabilities of our combat forces.

One issue that continues to take up much of our time these past several years, is the depot maintenance issue. It is my understanding that amendments will be offered today concerning depot maintenance issues. Although there is no language in my mark on this issue, I have been working closely with Members who have an interest in this area to try and understand their position. These Members have spent many hours listening to my concerns and for this I thank them.